

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO: INTERNAL REVIEWS

Information for prospective Student/Graduate Panellists



This flyer outlines the place of a review within the University and the role of the Student/Graduate representative on a review panel. It is intended to help you make an informed decision about whether to take on this role.

The Quality Advancement Unit co-ordinates the University's ongoing cycle of internal academic and administrative reviews. Further information can be found at www.otago.ac.nz/quality. You can also contact the Quality Advancement Unit (see below for details).

Why do we have reviews?

The term 'quality' has generally come to mean that the University can reach the goals that it has set itself as an institution; that it not only says that it provides high levels of expertise and commitment to its stakeholders, but that it can also prove it and that, where necessary, processes will be put in place to address weaknesses via improvement initiatives.

This process ensures that students receive a qualification that stands up both nationally and internationally and that standards are maintained and improved. It also allows staff and students the opportunity to voice their aspirations and concerns to an impartial panel.

The role of the student/graduate representative

You can find out about the usual composition of review panels in the Review Guidelines for Panel Members at www.otago.ac.nz/quality. Panels consist of senior members of the University of Otago and experts from other universities in New Zealand and overseas. The student/graduate panel member brings a different perspective to the review than other panel members. They are often the only panel member with an intimate knowledge of the unit being reviewed and are in a position to draw on those experiences and those of their peers.

If you choose to accept the role, as a panel member you will be expected to read documentation prior to the review, participate in the review visit and contribute to the final review report.

“Don’t underestimate your value on a review panel! I was quite worried going into the review.....surrounded by extremely experienced academics. But belonging to the department under review gives you a lot of insight. Don’t be afraid to speak up. And enjoy yourself!”

Professional development

- You will be working with specialists in your field from New Zealand and overseas and you will have excellent networking opportunities!
- You will be able to include in your CV the fact that you have participated in a formal University committee.
- Being a review panel member is an excellent opportunity for you to find out more about the University and how it works.

“It was a really good time to do some networking...the external reps were both highly regarded scholars in my field and I now feel confident asking them for advice on my research.”

“Being involved in the review process was probably the single most useful exercise for understanding how the University works that I have ever had. It was enormously enlightening.....I think it is important for a student to be there.”

The Review process

1. The self-review report

If you choose to accept the role, you will receive an official letter of invitation together with the Review Guidelines and other necessary documents. The first stage in the actual review process begins about six weeks before the review visit when you receive the self-review report written by staff of the unit being reviewed. The self-review report contains information that students would not normally encounter during their university experience. You should make yourself familiar with the contents and discuss anything you are unsure of with either the Review Secretary or the Convenor.

The Review Secretary will be your main point of contact for the Review and will send you any necessary information.

All material relating to the review is confidential to the review panel.

2. Submissions

The Review is advertised and stakeholders are invited to make oral and written submissions. Be aware that you will be privy to highly confidential discussions and documents – at times these can be controversial and of a sensitive nature.

3. The Review Visit

The review is normally held over three days with two days of meetings and the third day reserved for discussion of findings and initial drafting of the report. You will be expected to be present throughout the three days and be prepared for relatively long days! Meetings can be with individuals or groups, with University staff members at all levels, undergraduates, postgraduates or with people outside of the University. Some people ask to meet with the Panel and others are people who have been identified by the Panel as someone they would like to talk to. The Panel also makes a presentation of findings to the Head of the unit being reviewed and staff, as appropriate.

“Be informed and prepared as possible...and to not hang back with questions.”

4. After the review

Reports are expected to be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) 6 – 8 weeks after the review has taken place. Generally, panel members are asked to contribute to the draft report and the Convenor will collate and edit, seeking final approval from the panel before submitting. Be prepared to spend time after the review visit, reading and commenting on the draft report.

“Soak it all up. It is a good experience.”

If you have any questions please contact us at the Quality Advancement Unit:

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